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## BOOK NOTICES.

*Concord Days.* By A. Bronson Alcott. Boston: Roberts Brothers. 1872.

There are two sides or phases to the "Practical." The practical includes what is instrumental, subsidiary—a means to an end. This, so far as man is concerned, has relation first to his bodily wants: food, clothing, and shelter—to their satisfaction and supply; secondly, the ministration toward his spiritual wants which crave culture, or the ascent above individual limitations, and the realization of the generic ideal of humanity or Mind. In other words, the practical endeavor of Man must neutralize his immediate and slavish dependence on Nature (relieve him from the sensuous importunity of hunger, heat and cold, external intrusion), and it must enable him to realize in himself as particular individual the universal, or the consciousness of his entire species—the human race.

The first phase of the Practical looks to providing the means for the sustenance of the body; the body is, however, an instrument for the soul, or for the purposes of conscious being. Hence this phase looks to the creation of an instrument for an instrument—thus a double mediation.

The second phase of the Practical is ministerial directly to the final end, the Consciousness of Man. Subtract consciousness, and the possibility of the practical altogether vanishes. There must be a conscious adaptation in any one or all of its phases. A complete and entire consciousness of it—a comprehension of its entire scope—may be found, however, in few people. This necessary knowledge commonly takes on a partially unconscious form, the form of *conviction*, or religious faith. The individual looking out upon the world of instrumentalities, the infinite complex of mediations, is unable to trace it through to the end, and therefore borrows from the SEER his insight in the form of a Divine Revelation, and by its light believes that he possesses a personality which is absolute end and beyond all subservience to mere outward uses.

The Practical as regards provision for bodily wants has an incidental higher use. It is not simply for the neutralization of the physical pangs and inconvenience—the rendering of the same a nullity—that the bulk of human endeavor goes to the supply of the body. If all this were merely to still the Cerberean dog, the economy of Providence might be doubted. In stilling the clamor of the body, man is obliged to resort to social and political combination. The division of labor in Civil Society, the institution of the Family and the State,—all these are initiated to relieve man from the degrading slavery to bodily sensation. But only "initiated" for these institutions, all serve directly a spiritual end; when Spirit can provide for the body incidentally while providing in the most direct way for the Soul, then it has achieved freedom, for the External no longer sways or swerves.

In these great institutions—Family, Society, and the State—mankind arrives at the necessary conditions of spiritual combination. These it would organize therefore as mere forms, were there no material need to goad it

on—provided, once for all, that mankind had achieved rational insight into the means and demands of culture. But as the consciousness of the Race develops in Time, and is a *historical* existence and not an Absolute one, it follows that the bodily necessities with their pricking pangs are useful as initiatives,—nay, even necessary. Here the divine Providence is manifest: Nature urges herself to complete introversion, and the “breath of Life” is compelled to sustain itself by contest with the clay dwelling in which it finds itself. In satisfying the physical, the spiritual is excited to activity, and gradually gains ascendance and independence. The “mask of life” and the subjection of the Spiritual to material ends is seen to be only *Maya*—a mere delusion of the senses. All this servitude and slavery has been only for self-knowledge, and for the freedom of the self from the self—the realization of the Universal in the Particular. In Jordan’s beautiful version of the “*Sigfridsage*,” the spiritual lineaments of that old Northern-Mythic presentation of this greatest Fact of Existence are thus portrayed:\*

“Und hinunter in’s Nachtreich der nichtigen Schatten  
 Versank von der Seele Brunhildens der Selbstschein,  
 Die qualvolle Lüge der Larve des Lebens,  
 Der Traum des Tropfens der sich getrennt hat  
 Vom ewigen Urquell: er sei nur was Eignes,  
 Er könne sich mehren ohne zu mindern,  
 Er könne zerstören ohne zu sterben  
 Mordern und martern, ohne Mitpein,  
 Er dürfe verdammend in heillosem Dünkel  
 Zum übrigen Dasein “Du” nur sagen,  
 Ohne dass achzend die Antwort laute:  
 ch, das Urall, bin In dir wie Aussen;  
 Unheil üben ist eigenes Elend  
 Und wo du folterst da musst du fühlend  
 Die Bosheit büßen; den Alles BIST du.”

The blind Samson grinds in the mill, not for others but for himself; the imprisonment in sensuous being must be broken by pain and stern renunciation. When it is done, down falls that lying torment, the Mask of Life

\* In Mr. Davidson’s translation:

“And down to the night-realm of shadowy nothings  
 Sank the seeming of self from the soul of Brunhilde,  
 The martyring lie of the mask of living,  
 The dream of the drop that hath withdrawn it  
 From the primal source, as itself were something,  
 Weening to wax, while nothing waneth;  
 To rend asunder and yet not suffer;  
 To doom to perdition, secure of dying;  
 o murder and mangle and not be maimed;  
 With damning conceit and self-assertion,  
 To say *Thou*, in addressing the rest of Existence,  
 Nor hear the answer, in agony echoe!—  
 ‘I, the prime All, am within as without thee;  
 Who worketh woe, to himself doth work it.  
 Attempt to torture, thou shalt in atom-ment  
 Ache for thine evil, for thou art all things.’”

(*die qualvolle Lüge der Larve des Lebens*), and the soul looks through the interval upon the unveiled Eternal Verities. The Universal, the Absolute, God, is the root of this Ego which I call myself, and when I free myself from the glare of the senses (which cause selfishness in place of self-consciousness) I shall live and have my being in the presence of this great fact.

“Before I was a Me, in God then was I God,  
As soon as I shall die I shall again be God,”

says Angelus Silesius. And Fichte, in a sonnet, says (in Seeley's translation):

“The Eternal One  
Lives in my life and sees in my beholding.  
Nought is but God, and God is nought but Life.  
Clearly the veil of things rises before thee.  
IT IS THYSELF! What though the *Mortal* die?  
And hence there lives but God in thine endeavors,  
If thou wilt look through that which lives beyond this death  
The veil of things shall seem to thee as veil,  
And unveiled thou shalt look upon the Life divine.”

But there is a possibility of undervaluing that portion of our life which is called *secular* to distinguish it from the direct, conscious seeking of the Divine. As already stated, the whole realm of the Secular—the Family, Society, and the State—is also directly tributary to the divine life of Man.

It is not a mere instrumentality for the purpose of silencing the beast of the body, but rather is it the propædeutics of human combination and communication wherein spiritual life becomes a reality, a fixed fact. The division of labor and exchange of productions are the apparent ends of industry, but the cunning of Spirit uses them merely as means for the circulation of ideas. The real Practical result is the addition to consciousness of new foreign material—the appropriation of points of view that were alien to it. By solving (spiritually digesting) the contradiction between its own ideas and those of the new people with whom it comes in contact, it rises to more universal and truer ideas. The contrast between this commerce and the material commerce is to be marked. In material commerce the goods are to be consumed and rendered null; in the commerce of ideas, both parties gain, and neither lose anything.

By this discussion we have only sought the stand-point of the Idealist. Whether he be the mystic, the religious man, or the speculative philosopher, he regards the world as a “fleeting show,” considered by itself, and the great fact of the Universe to be the Immanence of Spirit, of the Divine Person. In this he is not necessarily “impractical,” but is quite likely to be intensely the contrary.

Mr. Alcott, the author of “Concord Days,” is widely known as one of the most uncompromising idealists in our time, or in all time. His early acceptance of the doctrine of “The Lapse” nearly as Plotinus taught it, together with his remarkable original statements of it, make him note-worthy in the history of modern thought. A brief discussion will make this apparent.

**MR. A. B. ALCOTT'S APERÇU, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES AND RELATIONS TO OTHER SYSTEMS.**

I.

Mr. Alcott's first principle is Person—or the absolute self-reflection—that which knows itself purely.

Hence it is a speculative stand-point. All stand-points are material which posit at the basis a fixed or rigid substance, a realized multiplicity, whether the same be called simply matter, force, law, form, cause, essence, ideas, or archetypes, &c., &c.; while, on the other hand, all stand-points are speculative which posit a self-moving, self-making pure act at the basis, whether they call it God, Person, or Idea, its proper names, or any of the other terms mentioned.

A demonstration that Person or Idea is the Absolute Principle, and that nothing else can be, would run somewhat as follows:

a. Being is either dependent or independent: if the latter, it is by itself; and if the former, it exists in another which *is* independent.

b. Actual Being is either determined through itself or another: if the latter, it is finite, not self-contained, not a totality; if the former, it is self-contained and infinite.

c. Hence all being is self-determined and independent, or else exists in and through a self-determined and independent.

d. That which is self-determined or self-made is not subordinate to Time and Space, but generates them in its own process; for if it were subordinate to Time and Space, it would be externally determined, and thus a dependent somewhat.

e. This self-determined Being is what we name God, Spirit, or Idea (in the sense of person).

*Remarks.*—In this proof we have taken the reflective method: a very deficient form, because we are forced to jump from one beginning to another. We have an insight into the true stand-points at first, and then construct a bridge to get to them. The genetic or dialectic method, on the other hand, unfolds the progress of discovery as well as its grounds. The method used above is similar to the mathematical method. It jumps across the river to get a plank to make a bridge with. Of course, itself does not need a bridge; it kindly makes one for others.

But the genetic method gives the wings with which the discoverer flew across the chasm. All these strictures on the method employed here will become evident on looking at the beginning, which is gratuitously assumed without explaining why it is done.

In the Geometric demonstration I draw this construction and that, but give no explanation of the why. Thus it is an external procedure when contrasted with the dialectic method.

Thus one may have a speculative stand-point and not a speculative procedure. It may be without any procedure, a mere positing of the various degrees of the finite; or these degrees may have the reflective nexus exemplified. Or, finally, the dialectic may be given, and in this case the whole system is speculative. This prepares us for a view of the second stage in Mr. Alcott's Philosophy—

**THE DESCENT (*Abfall*) OR LAPSE OF THE SOUL, AS PRESENTED BY MR. ALCOTT.****II.**

*a.* The first Principle, or God, is a Person—a self-determining, or creative, self-dirempting, or self-dissecting.

*b.* He creates that which is most like Himself—hence self-determined or creative beings. They differ from the Absolute Person only in degree; they are pure souls.

*c.* These pure souls may lapse or may not. They have the possibility of lapse, since they are free.

*d.* Those that lapse create thereby bodies for themselves; and, lapsing still further, generate the lower animals; and, these continuing the lapse, beget the plant-world; and thence results the inorganic world.

*e.* The limit to the lapse is the atom [i.e. complete self-externality, or space, or chaos].

*This Scheme has the following advantages as a view of the world:*

A. (*a*) It recognizes Person as the only substantial, and all else as dependent thereon. This is the opposite of the materialistic scheme.

(*b*) It places next to the Person, as the substance, that which is most like it, as being the most substantial; that which is least personal, is least substantial and most dependent, hence is placed last as depending on the dependent.

B. It represents all creation as through thought.

(*a*) The total thought of God thinks the total, and thus Himself as His own object, or Pure Spirit.

It is only finite thinking, i.e. an act of thought, which seizes only one moment of the totality, that creates an imperfect being. The finite thought thinks a part or phase as though it were a totality, and thus takes it out of its truth; hence arises untruth. In this sense, the theory of the finite resting on *lapse* is deepest truth.

(*b*) It implies that thinking creates its thought (the deep fundamental thought of Aristotle); hence seeing creates what it sees. The divine, harmonious, pure, unlapsed soul comprehends or seizes all in the One or Person; while the lapsed soul, in the form of sense and understanding, creates spectres, i.e. gives validity to abstractions, and thus cannot cancel them and arrive at their negative unity in pure thought. This leads us to the consideration of the positive value of this scheme.

**III.**

This order of stating the genesis is an order of rank or caste.

*a.* Each lower form has its explanation in the next higher or more concrete. The soul sees its moments scattered and isolated in the lower forms in such a manner that each is deficient and demands to be complemented by another.

*b.* When we consider the inorganic, we find strange properties—such, for example, as gravity, inertia, or light and heat; we ascend to the organic world and see what all these meant. The lower forms of the organic, such as vegetation, likewise have their explanation in the higher or animal forms,

and the animal has its explanation in man. Thus this system formally justifies itself.

According to Plotinus, "The soul appetizing is the animal. The world of vegetation is the merely reproductive soul. The world-soul is the immediate effective agency of the intellect which is its own object. The longing of the individual, special soul gives it a body; with the body it retains fancy and memory. Below it is the sense-world, and then feeling, desire, and the vegetative life."

In the Fifth Ennead, he has this order:—I. The One; II. The Intellect (dualism). The Primal Essence in its return to itself sees itself, and thus arises knowing or intellect; thus the Primal Essence is dirempted in its unity; as diremption (or intellect) it produces the lower orders.

Proclus considers the One as uncognizable in itself, and to be cognizable only as it is in its process and return. The relation of the unity to the distinctions which it produces is that of the procession from itself. He shows by a dialectic more or less external how all determinations cancel themselves and return to the One.

In these outlines it will be seen that Proclus is the student of Plato, and that Plotinus is Aristotelian in method. And, what is more surprising to preconceived notions concerning Mr. Alcott, he, like Plotinus, is rather an Aristotelian than Platonist.

Plato's highest principle is the Comprehension or genus (*iδέα*). This is the universal particular and individual as one process, hence dialectic throughout. Plato is therefore dialectical, always moving from the Many to the One, like Proclus. His dialectic is more or less mixed with reflections, seldom pure; and his great inferiority to Aristotle is in this, that he does not enunciate so clearly the self-thinking thought to be the first Principle.

When the logical idea finds all its presuppositions, so that its moments or phases become equal to the total, we have the IDEA, in which the dialectic vanishes. There is no longer an external negative unity cancelling the moments, for each moment is its own negative unity, and thus a complete totality. Each one is in the image of the whole, and the whole thus attains extant being, so that in the sphere of the idea we have the identity of Being or immediateness and Comprehension or subjectivity. This is seized by Aristotle in its immediate or elementary phase, and hence he has the appearance of proceeding empirically; for he seizes each stage as a totality, and leaves out the dialectic — unlike Plato. The complete Philosopher should show the genesis of the Idea dialectically, but this is Plato's side. Aristotle assumes it. Plato is always demonstrating the dialectical evolution of the Idea, but leaves the work unfinished.

From this we shall be able to point out the missing links in Mr. Alcott's Philosophy. He leaves out the dialectic entirely, and hence we have no historical Comprehension, but each step is treated as a totality or an idea. When this becomes entirely insufficient, he has recourse to concrete dialectical terms, such as appear in Psychology, or even Physiology, as "appetite," "desire," &c. The starting-point, too, or the genesis whose soul is the dialectic, is rigid, and we advance by reflections or else begin anew

with each link, making a discrete degree. Now, to the mind of the oracle all this is present. The totality hovers before it, but in such an immediate form that the permanent variable cannot be seized. Hence it is that the steps are seized isolatedly, while the mediation of the same remains unconsciously in the subject and is not explicitly stated.

Of course, when the dialectic is left out the series may be inverted without any obvious impropriety. Thus in the present instance we are taught that the most perfect created beings were created first instead of last—which is the Mosaic order and that of the ordinary conception. The apparent difficulty would entirely vanish if the creation of the first pure soul were considered dialectically; for then the links would fall between the Absolute Idea and its realization as Pure Spirit as cancelled moments, and hence not as real evil. As all these intermediate links would have their explanation and *raison d'être* in the Final Cause or perfect spirit, the predicate evil or good could not be applied to them, and hence the obstacle which Plotinus sought to remove (the *real* existence of evil as a creation of the Absolute) is shown to have no absolute existence, but only a relative one to finite consciousness (the reflective understanding). This, perhaps we have reason to believe it, is the true view of those who explain creation through the lapse. They cling to that form of stating it in order to emphasize the hierarchy of Spirit and the dependence of destiny upon Choice, or the freedom of the Will.

In the "Concord Days" we have the art-form of a Diary, the extracts running through the months from April to September inclusive. A second volume, we are told, will continue through the remaining months. It presents us the picture of a literary artist looking over and arranging his choice hours of the day, eliminating from the record of life its petty collisions, and, vintner-like, giving us the expressed serenity and wisdom.

Think of intercourse with one whose life is in intimate communion with the wisest and best of the race. Familiar with Plato, Pythagoras, Boehme, More, Glanvil, Coleridge, and the rapt mystics of all time, he moves about in the atmosphere of the *Paradiso*. It is the atmosphere of Aspiration and Prayer, like that of a Gothic cathedral; of serenity and purity, like that of a Greek temple. One reads books of Correspondence and Diaries chiefly for the society into which they admit him. The more elevated the tone of exposition and of the characters portrayed, the subtler the penetration of its cultivating influences. The Dialogues of Plato and the Lives of Plutarch have accomplished a wonderful work in this respect.

We have in the volume before us the poetry of private life—its universal aspects portrayed. The looseness of form permits private reflections, choice bits of quotation, scenery-painting, personal biography, disquisitions on politics and social science, neighborhood gossip, correspondence, poems from favorite authors, essays on the genius of present and past literary men, and mystic glances into the profounder realms of philosophic speculation. This freedom of form justifies much that in an ordinary book would be considered one-sided, as for example what is said of Carlyle and Goethe.

*The Basic Outline of Universology*: An Introduction to the newly-discovered Science of the Universe; its Elementary Principles; and the first stages of their development in the Special Sciences. Together with Preliminary Notices of *Alwato*, the newly-discovered Scientific Universal Language, resulting from the Principles of Universology. By Stephen Pearl Andrews. New York: Dion Thomas. 1872. Pages cxix and 764. Price, \$5.

*Contents* : Introduction ; Notices to the Reader ; Vocabulary. Chapter I.—General Statement and Distribution of the Subject ; Classification of the whole field of Human Knowledge. Chapter II.—Definitions and Illustrations of *Analogy* and *Correspondence* ; General Statement of the Evolution of Thought, hitherto ; Principles of Organization and Evolution. Chapter III.—*Analogy* more accurately Defined ; Scientific Analogy as the Basis of Universology ; the three Fundamental Laws of Universal Science, *Unism*, *Duism*, and *Trinism*, stated, illustrated, and defined. Chapter IV.—*Number* ; its Universal Aspects ; of the Various Numerical Series, and of the Meanings of Numbers ; Introductory Treatment of the Analogues of Form ; Parallel Distribution and Tabulation of the total scientific domain and of the several systems and departments of Philosophy ; the Great Crisis ; Suggestive Programme of Human Destiny. Chapter V.—*Form* ; the Science of Pure and Abstract Morphology ; and its Relations to Universology, with diagrammatic Illustrations ; Points, Lines, Surfaces, and Solids, with their Symbolism or Correspondential Signification. Chapter VI.—Morphology and Universology (continued) ; their Relations to Human Destiny ; the *Grand Reconciliation* of all Intellectual Conceptions, and the Prospective Harmony of the Organic Social Life of Man. Digested Index.

*Creator and Creation ; or, The Knowledge in the Reason of God and His Work*. By Laurens P. Hickok, D.D., LL.D. Boston: Lee & Shepard, Publishers. New York: Lee, Shepard & Dillingham. 1872.

Dr. Hickok is widely known in this country and abroad as one of the pioneers of Philosophy in America. He is a veteran in the service, and one may easily ascertain the importance of his labors by visiting our Educational institutions here in the West, and conversing with those teachers and professors who have to deal with Psychology or any other form of Philosophy. He will find that, in proportion to the depth and originality of the views presented for his consideration, a ready acknowledgment of obligation to the writings of Dr. Hickok will be confessed.

Among those whose profound study of Kant enabled them to come before the world with a new version of Philosophy founded on the Critical system, Dr. Hickok stands in the foremost rank. Such as Hamilton, Balmes, Cousin, indeed, have failed in attaining so positive a grasp of the categories of pure thought as our author.

His merit lies primarily in seizing the Kantian criterion of *a priori* ideas—universality and necessity—and in holding this firmly and confidently. In discriminating carefully between ideas and opinions, by means of this criterion the speculative philosopher will find his first task. The moral philosopher, likewise, will find no other foundation for his science.

The increasing influence of Positivism and the various materialistic schools of thought may be considered the occasion of the present book. and

its welcome will be cordial among those who have experienced the vicious circle described in the preface thus:

"An assumed Revelation may be studied and its facts arranged with much learning; but when a profound skepticism meets us, and drives us back of the facts, and asks for the validity of prophecy, and miracles, and inspiration; and even for the being of a God who can foreknow, and work miracles, and inspire human messengers,—we are thrown directly back upon these old assumptions of Nature's connections. No sense-experience puts within the consciousness anything by which Logic alone can enable us to know that which beyond Nature supports and connects Nature; and thus the logical understanding is driven helplessly to swing on the circle, of taking the Bible's God to make and hold together Nature, and then to take Nature's God to make and reveal the facts of the Bible."

Among the admirable things in this book will be found the able treatment of Positivism and the solution of the Darwinian problem. Aristotle, indeed, when he set up the doctrine of Final Cause as the ultimate explanation of all Natural phenomena, knew the last word on Natural Selection as a philosophic theory. "Not sex instinct, but the Absolute Ideal, determines the higher unity of all species," says our author.

In his attempt at a speculative construction of Nature, his chapters on Antagonist force, Dilemptive force, and Revolving force; on Life, Sense, and Reason,—are profound and suggestive, resting as they do upon a chapter devoted to Space and Time—a chapter that Kant himself might have written. But we must mention the descriptive sketch of the historical development of Critical Philosophy, which he divides into three stages or epochs:—1<sup>st</sup>, Kant's Critique of Pure Reason; 2<sup>d</sup>, Fichte's Science of Knowledge; 3<sup>d</sup>, Hegel's Science of Logic. To the latter he concedes: "That it is the entire compass of all knowledge, so far as the *subjective process* of knowing is concerned. The most searching criticism will find scarcely anything, perhaps utterly nothing, to object to it as a process complete of the science of *Thinking*." When the question is asked, "What is this worth intrinsically, as philosophy of *knowing overt realities?*" we think some other predicate than "worthless" will be given if one remembers that all this is but the genetic unfolding of the Universal and Necessary, which is equally objective and subjective, inasmuch as it furnishes not only the forms of pure thought but the logical conditions of all phenomena. As the *a priori* science of Mathematics gives us the means of cognizing matter and motion, so the *a priori* system of pure thought gives us the ideas through which to interpret human history, science, and institutions; and also natural phenomena and the empirical sciences. The recognition of pure thought as embodied and realized in the world of man and matter is Hegel's chief work, and throughout its entire extent empirical results are taken as the raw material. On page 128-9, it is difficult to agree with Dr. Hickok when he seems (contrary to the general purpose of his book) to teach that God's Absolute thought is not solid enough for the real world; i.e. that Creation is not God's thought; or that the Absolute thinking-process is confined to a subjective time and space which cannot be the time and space of human, conscious experience. Not only Hegelians, but the followers of Malebranche and Berkeley—indeed the whole race of Platonists and Aristotelians—must enter protest against that.